



In Memory of  
**Sergeant**  
**JOHN SHANNON**

**404264**, Royal Australian Air Force  
who died age 21  
on 30 November 1941

Son of John Bertmoore Shannon and Edith Muriel Shannon,  
of Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia

Remembered with honour  
HAMBURG WAR CEMETERY, GERMANY



SERGEANT  
**JOHN SHANNON**  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE  
SERVICE NUMBER: 404264



Australian War Memorial photograph PO7399.001 of John Shannon.

Sergeant John Shannon, the son of John Bertmoore Shannon and Edith Muriel Shannon (nee Wilesmith) , was born at Mackay in Queensland on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1920. He was educated via the Primary Correspondence School during the period 1933 until 1934 and then attended the Toowoomba Grammar School during the years 1935 and 1936 where he passed the University of Queensland Junior Public Examination. Whilst a student at Toowoomba Grammar he served in the Cadet Unit. After leaving school he was employed in the grazing industry. He applied for aircrew training in the Royal Australian Air Force on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1940. He had previously undertaken flying training and had flown 11 hours 40 minutes dual and 20 minutes solo with the Royal

Queensland Aero Club. He was enrolled into the Reserve of the R.A.A.F. on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1940 after swearing an Oath/Affirmation. His physical description at the time of enlistment was that he was 5 feet 7 inches in height and weighed 127 pounds. He had a fair complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. He stated that he was of the Church of England religion. At the age of 19 years and 10 months he was enlisted into the Citizen Air Force of the R.A.A.F. at No. 3 Recruiting Centre in Brisbane on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1940 after giving a commitment that he would serve for the duration of the war and an additional twelve months. He was allotted the service number of 404264. He gave his next of kin as his father, Mr John Bertmoore Shannon, residing at "Tooolombah", St Lawrence, via Rockhampton in Queensland.

Sergeant John Shannon joined No. 2 Initial Training School at Bradfield Park in Sydney, New South Wales, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1940. He joined No. 2 Elementary Flying Training School at Archerfield in Queensland on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1940. He joined No. 3 Service Flying Training School at Amberley in Queensland on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1940. He was awarded the Flying Qualification Badge on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1941. He was promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1941. He joined No. 3 Embarkation Depot on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1941 and No. 2 Embarkation Depot on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1941 to prepare for service overseas on attachment to the Royal Air Force. He embarked by sea

transport from Sydney in New South Wales on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1941 and he disembarked in the United Kingdom on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1941 having travelled via Canada. He joined No. 3 Personnel Despatch and Reception Centre at Bournemouth on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1941. He joined No. 6 Operational Training Unit at Royal Air Force Station Sutton Bridge on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1941. After completing his training he joined No. 455 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force at Royal Air Force Station Swinderby for operational duty.

Sergeant John Shannon was the Pilot and Captain of a Handley Page Hampden bomber No. P1272 that was detailed to attack its target of Hamburg in Germany. The aircraft took off from its base on 16.54 hours. The aircraft went missing on operations on the night of 30<sup>th</sup> November/1<sup>st</sup> December 1941. The aircraft was presumed to have been lost as a result of enemy action. It was reported that there was heavy anti-aircraft fire round the target. No distress signal was received from the aircraft. An aircraft that returned from this operation reported seeing an unidentified aircraft shot down in flame in the centre of Hamburg at 20.30 hours and it may have been Sergeant Shannon's aircraft.



*Aircrew in front of their Hampden aircraft shortly after returning from a raid.*

The Commanding Officer of No. 455 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force at Royal Air Force Station Swinderby submitted the following report on the loss of Sergeant Shannon's aircraft on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1941:

*On the night of November/1<sup>st</sup> December 1941, Sergeant Shannon (Pilot), Pilot Officer A.G. Sands (Observer), Sergeant A.G. Shorey, and Sergeant V.E. Towers (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner) were detailed to undertake an operational flight to attack Hamburg in Hampden P1272. The aircraft took off at 16.54 hours and the weather at Base was satisfactory. Over target area the visibility was good. Enemy ground defences were very active reports having been received of heavy flak around target. No enemy fighter activity reported. There were no distress signals received. One aircraft reported seeing an unidentified aircraft shot down in flames in the centre of Hamburg at 20.30 hours. This could possibly be connected with the non-return of aircraft P1272. Sergeant*

***Shannon was posted to this Squadron as 1<sup>st</sup> Pilot, and had completed 2 operational sorties. Wing Commander, Commanding No. 455 Squadron.***

Subsequent information received from German sources by the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva confirmed that Sergeant Shannon was killed on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1941 when his aircraft was shot down near Trave Canal, Hamburg Harbour. German Totenlist (Death List) No. 67 stated that Sergeant Shannon's body was recovered from the sea and buried on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1941 in the cemetery at Hamburg Ohlsdorf. The Chief of Medical Staff at Hamburg stated that he identified Sergeant Shannon by the name on his clothing. All four crew members were buried in a collective grave 21 in the cemetery.

**Note:**

On 29<sup>th</sup> August 1941 No 455 Squadron was the first Australian Squadron to bomb Germany. Following this it carried out mine-laying operations off the coast of France as well as attacking industrial targets in Germany. Sergeant Shannon's operation in which he lost his life may have been a mine-laying one.

**The following notice appeared in the Central Queensland Herald on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 1941:**

*News has been received in Rockhampton that Sergeant John Shannon, son of Mr and Mrs Jack Shannon, of Tooloombah Station, St Lawrence, and a grandson of Mr J. B. Shannon, Penlington Street, The Range, Rockhampton, is reported missing. He was attached to the Royal Air Force and had been flying in an American bomber in air raids over Europe. In a letter received from him last Tuesday, he stated that he had been appointed captain of his crew, and expected to get his commission in a few days. Later on the same day information came from the head office, Melbourne, that the bomber and the whole crew were missing.*



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